

Application No.: 10/725,197
Response to Final Office Action of 3/21/2007

9

Docket No.: 324212003700

REMARKS

Claims 1-59 were pending in the present application. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested in light of the reasons given in this document.

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for allegedly being unpatentable over Zamir et al., US 2005/0240580 ("Zamir"), in view of Pollack et al., US 6,578,025 ("Pollack").

The Examiner, on page 6 of the present Office Action, states the following:

Zamir did not specifically detail the claimed features of "said relevancy scores are based on behavior of a plurality of users and at least one said user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile" as recited in the independent claims 1, 21 and 31. On the other hand Pollack et al. achieved the aforementioned claimed feature by providing a method and apparatus for distributing information to users including methodologies for providing information to a plurality of users based on the relevancy of the information to the users.

In response, Applicants respectfully disagree. Independent claims 1, 21, and 31 recite, among other things, "providing a plurality of candidate search terms related to said first search term, wherein said candidate search terms are generated in accordance with relevancy scores, said candidate search terms comprise potential alternative search terms, said relevancy scores are based on behavior of a plurality of users, and at least one user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile."

In contrast, Pollack discloses providing an input of a user profile to generate a relevancy score. The "relevancy score" is generated by "using similarity scores 108 and the user profiles 112" (col. 6, lines 34-35).

A "similarity score" is based on comparing an incoming message with messages previously received by the system, by storing "message features" in a "message feature database."

sf-2294308 v1

Application No.: 10/725,197
Response to Final Office Action of 3/21/2007

10

Docket No.: 324212003700

The message feature database may "contain records for a plurality of messages, such as previous incoming messages received by the system 100" (col. 6, lines 18-19). Any message received by the system is stored in the "message feature database," which is described as follows:

The similarity engine 104 may, for example, be a standard search engine that compares query text (e.g., the incoming message 102) to a database (e.g., the message feature database 106). Such a search engine compares the query text to records in the database and produces a score for each record in the database indicating whether and/or how closely the query text matches the record. (Emphasis added) (col. 9, lines 37-43).

The messages represented in the message feature database 106 need not be messages previously transmitted using the system 100. Furthermore, the messages represented in the message feature database 106 may be any kind of documents or data.

Therefore, "similarity score" is based on message features, and not "behavior of a plurality of users," as recited in the claims.

Furthermore, the "relevancy score" determined by a "user profile" is described as follows:

As described above with respect to FIG. 1, the incoming message 102 is delivered as an input to a relevancy evaluator 126. The relevancy evaluator 126 produces a relevancy score 310 based on the incoming message 102 and a user profile 306 indicating preferences of the user 122 for messages previously received by the system 100. As described above with respect to FIG. 1, the system 100 may also serve a plurality of users, in which case the user profile 306 may be one of the user profiles 112 (FIG. 1) and the relevancy score 310 may be one of the relevancy scores 114. (Emphasis added) (col. 13, lines 19-28).

Therefore, Pollack does not disclose or suggest "relevancy scores are based on behavior of a plurality of users, and at least one user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile."

Even if the relevancy score disclosed in Pollack is based on a plurality of users, each of the plurality of users has a user profile. For support, see col. 3, lines 3-7; col. 3, lines 38-54. Every user of the system disclosed in Pollack has a user profile as described as follows:

af-2294508 v1

Application No.: 10/725,197
Response to Final Office Action of 3/21/2007

11

Docket No.: 324212003700

Generating a separate relevancy score for the incoming message 102 for each user of the system 100 and maintaining separate user profiles 112 for each user of the system allows the system to behave according to the needs and preferences of individual users. For example, one user might adjust the relevancy threshold in his user profile to filter out all but the messages that are most relevant to him, while another user might adjust her relevancy threshold to filter out only the messages that are least relevant to her. Generation of separate relevancy scores 114 and maintenance of separate user profiles 112 for each user of the system 100 makes such customization possible. (Emphasis added) (col. 8, lines 43-54).

Therefore, Pollack, at least, does not disclose or suggest relevancy scores "based on behavior of a plurality of users, and at least one user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile."

Moreover, Zamir discloses that its relevancy determination is based on an individual's user preference according to the personal user profile of the specific user requesting a search. Zamir discloses that "a set of placed content that matches the interest of the user is identified, and the set of placed content is ordered in accordance with the user profile" (Emphasis added) (paragraph [0010]):

A user profile comprises multiple items that characterize a user's interests or preferences. These items are extracted from various information sources, including previous search queries submitted by the user, links from or to the documents identified by the previous queries, sampled content from the identified documents as well as personal information implicitly or explicitly provided by the user. (Emphasis added) (paragraph [0011]).

Therefore, Zamir and Pollack, either alone or in combination, at least do not teach or suggest that "relevancy scores are based on behavior of a plurality of users, and at least one user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile" as recited in claims 1, 21, and 31. Therefore, the addition of Pollack does not cure the deficiencies of Zamir as applied to claims 1, 21, and 31. In sum, none of the references discloses or suggests determining relevancy scores as required by the claims. For at least this reason, the alleged prior art references, alone or combined, do not teach or

sf-2294508 v1

Application No.: 10/725,197
Response to Final Office Action of 3/21/2007

12

Docket No.: 324212003700

suggest all the claim limitations as required to establish a prima facie case of obviousness (MPEP 2142) for claims 1-59.

Furthermore, even if Pollack teaches or suggests "relevancy scores based on behavior of a plurality of user, and at least one user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile," Zamir teaches away from using the "behavior of a plurality of users, and at least one user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile" to provide candidate search terms:

However, if the user's preference is significantly biased by some personal factors that are not clearly reflected in a search query itself, or if the user's preference is quite different from the random user's preference, the search results from the same search engine may be less useful to the user, if not useless. (Emphasis added) (paragraph [0007]).

Zamir as a whole thus discourages using the "behavior of a plurality of users, and at least one user of said plurality of users does not have a user profile" to determine relevancy scores in order to provide the candidate search terms, as recited in claims 1, 21 and 31.

Therefore, Applicant further submits that the disclosures of Zamir and Pollack, taken in their entirety, in fact do not provide one skilled in the art with a teaching, suggestion, or motivation to modify the references to meet the features of claims 1, 21, and 31, or suggest the desirability of the features of the present claims. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1, 21, and 31 are allowable over Zamir and Pollack.

For at least the foregoing, claims 2-20, 22-30, and 32-59, which are dependent from claims 1, 21 and 31, are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections to claims 1-59 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested for claims 1-59.

sf-2294508 v1

Application No.: 10/725,197
Response to Final Office Action of 3/21/2007

13

Docket No.: 324212003700

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing Docket No. 324212003700. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

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Respectfully submitted,

By


Denise H. Wong

Registration No. 59,622

MORRISON & FOERSTER LLP

425 Market Street

San Francisco, California 94105-2482

Tel.: (415) 268-6221

Fax: (415) 268-7522